



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Site File 7.1  
Public Health Service

Agency for Toxic Substances  
and Disease Registry  
Atlanta GA 30333

June 6, 1991

Mr. John Meyer  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Region 10 (HW-113)  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98101

Re: Monsanto Preliminary Health Assessment

Dear Mr. Meyer:

Thank you for your earlier comments on the above preliminary health assessment. I am sorry that it has taken so long to respond to you and to get to this public comment stage. This preliminary health assessment will be available for public comment near the end of June, barring no unforeseen difficulties. I do appreciate the time and effort that you put into reviewing the report and compiling comments. I also appreciate your "faxing" me the Harris letter which was not in our file materials. You will receive, under separate cover, the updated, public comment copy of this report when it is sent out for public review.

With the exception of comment number 20, I believe that I have been able to reflect all of your other comments in modifications to the preliminary health assessment. I found the comments to be very helpful in improving the accuracy of the document. If you find that there are still inaccuracies, please let me know.

Your comment number 20 suggests that follow-up health studies be considered for the Harris family and possibly Monsanto employees, all of which have been exposed to contaminated drinking water. This health assessment has been reviewed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) Health Activities Review Panel (HARP) to recommend follow-up studies or other health actions, if needed. The purpose of this HARP review is to evaluate the impact resulting from exposure to hazardous substances and, as indicated, to prevent or mitigate adverse human health effects related to those exposures. Regarding the exposure through drinking the contaminated groundwater, the panel has not recommended any follow-up activities at this time; however, this option may be revisited pending new data findings specifically asked for in the "Recommendations."

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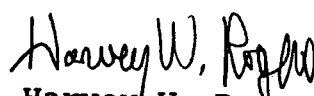
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For the employees, the maximum exposure levels to both cadmium and vanadium have been below levels of known health effects and should no longer be continuing (as of December 1989, as pointed out in your comments on this health assessment). Similarly, the exposure to fluoride in the Harris well is no longer occurring and the health effect (mottling of the teeth) from the past exposure is noted. In either of these previous exposure situations, a current health follow-up study or activity would not seem to offer the benefit of suggesting further corrective measures, since they have already been taken, or adding to the data base for characterizing health outcomes from exposure to the substances involved.

You also mentioned the possibility of looking at local population health outcomes for possible impacts from exposure to radioactive slag. The revised preliminary health assessment does recommend that the state health department review Soda Springs health outcome data for such indications of exposure as you suggest. Coincidentally, our agency will continue to review new information regarding radionuclide contamination in southeast Idaho and may have additional follow-up recommendations for this and other health assessments for sites in the affected area. In the interim, this preliminary health assessment has been modified from the earlier version that you reviewed, to relate our findings based on the current information available to ATSDR.

Please let me know if you have any other comments. Once again, thank you for your help on this assessment.

Sincerely,



Harvey W. Rogers  
Environmental Engineer  
Environmental Science Section  
Remedial Programs Branch  
Division of Health Assessment  
and Consultation